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ABSTRACT

This guide is designed to help principals provide better services to English language learners whom they suspect might have a disability. It provides recommendations from the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) for ensuring appropriate referral and services to these students. The first part contains self-assessment information that can help principals review student data and determine if their school may have an over-representation (or underrepresentation) of English language learners in special education. Next, the guide covers issues related to communicating with English language learners and their families. It provides NABE recommendations for working with interpreters, interpreter pools, interpretation equipment, and using the native language in the classroom. The guide stresses that parents are vital to the success of any educational program and the third section focuses on communication with parents of children with disabilities whose native language is not English. The next

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section discusses using Teacher Assistance Teams to reduce inappropriate referrals to special education. The following section looks at the process of assessment, eligibility, and the development of the Individualized Education Program. The final section focuses on instruction and professional development. Appendices include resources, NABE recommended forms, and NABE recommended self-assessment checklists. (Contains 18 references.) (CR)

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A Self-Assessment Guide for Principals

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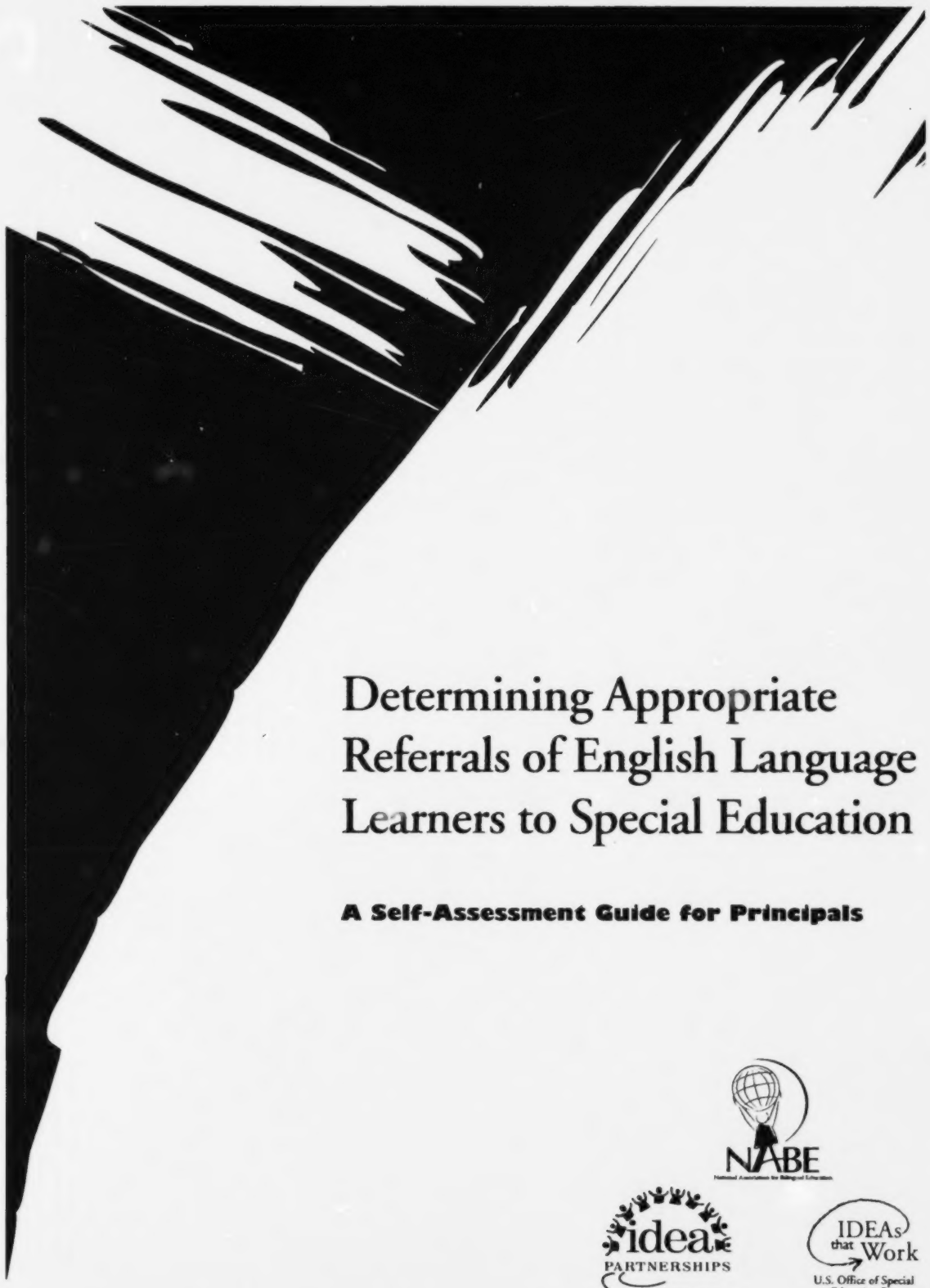

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[1]IDEA Local Implementation by Local Administrators Partnership
[2]Associations of Service Providers Implementing IDEA Reforms in Education Partnership, Families and Advocates Partnership for Education, The Policymaker Partnership

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Background and Acknowledgments

After the 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA '97), the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) within the U.S. Department of Education announced the creation of the IDEA Partnerships Projects. These projects were aimed at increasing education and outreach to ensure that children with disabilities receive a quality education. One of those grants was awarded to the IDEA Local Implementation by Local Administrators (ILIAD) Partnership at the Council for Exceptional Children. The ILIAD Partnership comprises 17 national education organizations, including the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE).

Given the rapidly increasing numbers of English language learners in the United States, ILIAD and NABE decided to develop a guide for principals on how to provide better services to these children, particularly those whom they suspect have a disability. While researchers have written extensively about avoiding unnecessary referrals to special education, ILIAD and NABE believe this guide for principals is needed. Its focus is on the principal's unique position as the instructional leader of the school. We hope this guide can help principals better serve English language learners and their families.

NABE formed an Advisory Committee that met in February 2001 to discuss the topics included in this guide. The Advisory Committee comprised researchers, practitioners, and a parent representative. The members are listed on page 3.

ILIAD and NABE wish to thank a number of individuals who contributed to the development of this guide: The members of the Advisory Committee for being so generous in sharing their time, experience, and knowledge; Dr. Selete Kofi Avoké and Dr. Grace Zamora-Duran of the

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, for reviewing the content; and Margaret McLeod for her time and leadership in developing the content and writing the guide.

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Introduction

What is this self-assessment guide for principals, and why have the IDEA Local Implementation by Local Administrators (ILIAD) Partnership and the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) collaborated on its development? The answers to these questions are multifaceted. The issue of the disproportionality of culturally and linguistically diverse students in some special education programs continues to receive a great deal of attention from researchers, school personnel, and the media (Cho, 2001). Disproportionality occurs when the percentage of any particular ethnic or racial group that receives special education services is greater or less than the percentage of this group in the general school population.

Disproportionality occurs for many reasons. This guide explores some of them and offers suggestions for improving services to students who speak languages other than English at home and who may come from other countries. Because the backgrounds of these students may be very different from those of the school personnel, their educational needs can be misunderstood—particularly by staff who may not have had sufficient training in working with diverse populations. While disproportionality affects other student groups, the focus of this guide is on those who are learning English as a second language.

Throughout the guide, this group of students is referred to as "English language learners." Although federal legislation uses the term "limited English proficient," NABE feels the term focuses on the students' lack of English-

language skills. NABE prefers English language learners because it focuses on the process of English language acquisition.

Understandably, much of the material written on this topic has been directed toward teachers. Teachers are, after all, the frontline workers who make daily decisions about their students. Principals are often overlooked. This oversight can have serious consequences in that the principal is a critical change agent in the way business is done throughout the *entire* school, not just in individual classrooms. (See the vignette on Key Elementary School on page 7 of this guide.) Although the guide has been developed for principals, we hope others will find it useful as well.

Finally, we thought it would be important to remind principals of those provisions contained in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act amendments of 1997 (IDEA '97) that are related to English language learners and to consider how they affect principals as the instructional leaders of their schools. An important change that was made during the 1997 reauthorization of IDEA requires that states collect annual data on the race and ethnicity of children being served under this law and submit them to the Office of Special Education Programs of the U.S. Department of Education. The purpose of this change is to help states ensure that students from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds are not represented disproportionately in some special education programs.

NABE and ILIAD hope that you find this publication useful in improving services for English language learners in your school. As the number of children who speak other languages and come from other cultures continues to grow, very few schools will be unaffected by the issues described here.

Why Focus on the Principal?

As the instructional leaders of the schools, principals are in the best position to improve instruction for English language learners. This includes making sure that referrals to special education are appropriate. The referral of such students to special education programs is a topic that has been written about and debated extensively, yet some English language learners continue to be inappropriately placed in some special education programs.

English language learners tend to be overrepresented in some categories of disability (e.g., learning disabilities). Making a determination of disability for native English speakers in these categories can be problematic; for speakers of other languages it can be even more difficult. It is especially important to gather data from a wide variety of sources when making a referral to special education.

Fortunately, there are steps you and your staff can take to ensure that your referrals to special education are appropriate and to ensure that, when your special education team determines that children are eligible for special education services, those children receive the services they actually need.

English language learners are referred to special education for many reasons. Many of those reasons are as valid as they would be for native English speakers. However, students often are referred while they are in the process of acquiring English language skills. Unfortunately, to staff who do not know about second language acquisition, these students can appear to be experiencing a language delay. Other students are referred because their behavior, while within the norms of their own culture, appears inappropriate to those not familiar with that culture. It is these referrals that are most problematic.

KEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Key Elementary School is located in Arlington County, Virginia. The smallest county in the state, Arlington is directly across the river from Washington, DC. Arlington has a diverse population, racially and ethnically as well as economically. The county's racial and ethnic composition has changed dramatically during the past 10 years. For example, the Hispanic population has increased nearly 19% during that time.

For the school year 1999-2000, Key Elementary had approximately 520 students enrolled in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. About 60% were Hispanic, 33% were White, and close to 7% were African-American. Asians made up less than one percent of the student population.

The school has a two-way bilingual program, meaning that some of the classes are provided in Spanish and some are provided in English. Each student, therefore, has two teachers—one for each language. Key Elementary is a magnet school with a fairly long waiting list. In 1999-2000, approximately 53% of Key Elementary students were on free or reduced lunch, compared with 39% for all public schools in the county.

The principal of Key Elementary has been on the job for six years and has fostered a collegial, collaborative environment among all the staff. When she arrived at the school, she and the teachers felt they needed a formal pre-referral process such as a Teacher Assistance Team to address the challenges posed by some students. The process that has evolved during the last few years is called the Student Assistance Team (SAT).

The SAT meets every Friday afternoon and is chaired by a different teacher each year. When a student's case is brought to the SAT, both the Spanish and the English teacher are present, along with the English as a second language teacher, the two teachers from the student's previous grade, and—if the child is already receiving special education services—the special education teacher as well.

The SAT uses several forms to record the proceedings and the outcomes of the meetings. During the meeting, the team develops strategies and creates an action plan. Team members then note the person responsible for each action and a timeline to be followed in carrying out the plan.

Perhaps the most important measure of the success of this process is the number and quality of referrals to special education. During the 1999-2000 school year, 39 students went through the pre-referral process. Of these, only 18 were referred to special education. Including these students, the school made a total of 24 referrals to special education from an enrollment of approximately 520 students. This means that Key Elementary referred only about 5% of its students for a special education evaluation. (Elementary students receiving special education services made up 12% of the elementary-age student population in Virginia during the 1998-99 school year.)

The principal of Key Elementary attributes part of the success of the process to helping teachers "get off the panic button" when faced with a student experiencing academic or behavioral difficulties. The process forces teachers to review the student's academic background and history and make adaptations that allow the child to remain in the classroom. The principal feels the process "gets the conversation going" among the staff members who work with a particular child. This process allows teachers to develop a more complete picture of the child's experiences in the total school environment. For example, a teacher may express concern about a particular child and, through the SAT, learn that the child is not experiencing difficulties in any other class. This allows the teacher to examine the dynamics of his or her own classroom with the support and input of colleagues.

All indicators are that this is a successful process for Key Elementary School. The principal has expressed great satisfaction with the SAT.

Sources:

Interview with Marjorie Myers, Principal, Key Elementary School

Statistics on Arlington County from www.smartplace.org

Statistics on Arlington County Public Schools from www.arlington.k12.va.us

Twenty-second Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2000)

How to Use this Guide

This guide is designed to provide principals and others with a general overview of the issue so that they may review their programs for signs of disproportionality and take appropriate action as needed. To this end, the guide presents information on the following topics:

- The first part contains self-assessment information that can help you review student data and determine if your school may have an overrepresentation (or underrepresentation) of English language learners in special education.
- Next, the guide covers issues related to communicating with English language learners and their families. Parents are vital to the success of any educational program, so we have included a section on parental involvement. It is designed specifically to address the needs of those parents whose native language is not English.
- In an effort to reduce inappropriate referrals to special education, many schools are using Teacher Assistance Teams. We have included a section on what these teams are and how they operate.
- The next section looks at the process of assessment, eligibility, and the development of the Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- The final section focuses on instruction and professional development.

The guide also includes forms and self-assessment charts in the Appendices. These forms and charts will be useful tools for you to use in conducting a self-assessment and working with English-language learners and their families.

NABE Recommendations for Conducting a Self-Assessment

To determine how your school is doing, it is useful to start by reviewing student data to see if too many (or too few) of your English language learners are being referred to some special education programs. Before you begin your self-assessment, a quick discussion about demographics may be useful.

To focus the issue, let us look at an example using national data. As you can see in Table 1, there does not appear to be a significant discrepancy between the number of Hispanic students in the general school population and the number of Hispanic students in special education programs. However, as Table 2 shows, when examining those data for individual disability categories, Hispanic students exceed the percentages in hearing impairments, but are underrepresented in categories such as mental retardation, autism, and developmental delay. It is also striking to note that Asian students are underrepresented in most special education categories and that Black students are overrepresented in the emotionally disturbed and mentally retarded categories.

TABLE 1: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS AGES 6-21 SERVED UNDER IDEA IN 1999-2000 BY RACE AND ETHNICITY

	6 to 21 Year Olds Served Under IDEA	6 to 21 Year Olds in the General Population
White	62.9	64.5
Hispanic	13.7	16.2
Black (non-Hispanic)	20.3	14.5
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.8	3.8
American Indian	1.3	1.0

Source: Twenty-third Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the IDEA (U.S. Department of Education, 2002)

TABLE 2: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS AGES 6-21 SERVED UNDER IDEA IN 1999-2000 BY DISABILITY, RACE, AND ETHNICITY

Disability	White	Hispanic	Black (non-Hispanic)	Asian/ Pacific Islander	American Indian
Specific Learning Disability	62.1	16.6	18.4	1.6	1.4
Speech or Language Impairment	67.6	12.7	16.1	2.4	1.2
Mental Retardation	53.8	9.1	34.2	1.8	1.1
Emotional Disturbance	61.5	8.9	27.3	1.2	1.1
Multiple Disabilities	64.8	11.5	20.0	2.3	1.5
Hearing Impairment	59.8	17.9	16.4	4.6	1.3
Orthopedic Impairment	66.8	14.8	14.7	3.0	0.8
Other Health Impairment	74.7	8.0	14.9	1.4	1.1
Visual Impairment	62.9	14.0	18.6	3.5	1.1
Autism	64.9	9.2	20.5	4.8	0.7
Deaf-Blindness	54.6	11.2	24.7	7.5	2.0
Traumatic Brain Injury	68.5	10.5	16.9	2.4	1.6
Developmental Delay	63.7	4.1	30.5	0.8	0.9

Source: Twenty-third Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the IDEA (U.S. Department of Education, 2002)

When you begin your self-assessment, look at the demographics in your school, beginning with your English language learners. For any given ethnic group there should be about the same proportion in special education as there is in the school's population. For example, if Vietnamese children comprise 10% of your school's population, they should make up approximately 10% of your special education enrollment.

You also may want to examine the issue of underrepresentation in your school. Again, using the example of the 10% Vietnamese enrollment in the school, if Vietnamese students make up only 5% of your special education enrollment, teachers may not be referring students who have a disability. If students are not being referred, they may not be receiving services they need and to which they are entitled under IDEA '97. You can use the chart on pages 46-47 of this guide to help in conducting an assessment of referrals in your school.

You also may want to review the data for individual classrooms. Is there a teacher who seems to make many referrals to special education every year? This teacher may be struggling with how to provide instruction to a classroom with a diverse student population. Other teachers may never refer English language learners to special education; they may assume, mistakenly, that children need to learn English before they can benefit from these services.

Finally, you may want to monitor referrals to special education programs to determine why students are being referred. Ladner and Hammons (2001) found that in schools with a predominantly White faculty, culturally and linguistically diverse students are referred and placed in some special education programs at a much higher rate than are White students. Just as you can look at patterns for individual teachers, you can look at schoolwide patterns to see if students are being referred for one particular reason. For example, if your student population has a great diversity of languages and students are being referred for suspected language delays, staff may need training on second language acquisition. If students are being referred for behavior problems, teachers may need assistance in managing student behavior.

Student Demographics: Questions to Consider

- How many children of each ethnic background does my school have? What are the percentages?
- Of the total number of students in my school, how many are receiving special education services?
- Of the students receiving special education services, what percent are English language learners?
- For each ethnic group represented in my school, is there an approximately equal proportion of this group receiving special education services?
- Does the staff of my school need in-service training on English language learners?

NABE Recommendations for Communicating with English Language Learners and Their Parents

Understanding a child's family and social background is an important first step in ensuring that your referrals to special education are as accurate as possible. Communication with parents and families during this process is critical. Communication can be a daunting task in schools where the students speak several different languages. Some school districts have developed interpreter pools to provide translation services during parent meetings, assessment, IEP meetings, etc. Other school districts hire parent liaisons to work directly with parents in their native language. There are other strategies you can use to communicate with parents in their native language if your district does not have a policy in place. You can use the charts on pages 48-51 of this guide to assess the kind of language resources available in your community.

TABLE 3: WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMONLY SPOKEN LANGUAGES IN U.S. SCHOOLS?

Language	Percentage of English Language Learners Who Speak this Language	Language	Percentage of English Language Learners Who Speak this Language
Spanish	76.6	Japanese	0.4
Vietnamese	2.3	Urdu	0.4
Hmong	2.2	Hindi	0.3
Korean	1.1	French	0.3
Creole (Haitian)	1.1	Ukranian	0.3
Cantonese	1.0	Farsi	0.2
Arabic	0.9	Cherokee	0.2
Russian	0.9	Albanian	0.2
Navajo	0.9	Yup'ik	0.2
Tagalog	0.8	Ilocano	0.2
Khmer (Cambodian)	0.7	Bengali	0.2
Chinese (unspecified)	0.7	Gujarati	0.2
Mandarin	0.5	Mien	0.2
Portuguese	0.5	Polish	0.2
Armenian	0.4	German	0.2
Serbian-Croatian	0.4	Samoan	0.1
Laotian	0.4	Chamorro	0.1
Punjabi	0.4	Other languages	4.2

Source: Survey of the States' Limited English Proficient Students and Available Educational Programs and Services, 1999-2000 Summary Report (Kindler, 2002)

Community Language Resources

Frequently, schools find that they enroll one or several students who speak a language not previously known in the school. Finding speakers of this new language in order to communicate with students and parents can present a serious challenge. You can generally find persons who speak the languages represented in your school in the community, colleges and universities, religious organizations, social services agencies, and consulates. Contact these organizations to ask if their employees or volunteers would agree to serve as interpreters. The individuals you identify may also serve as cultural interpreters who can be of great assistance in explaining the cultures from which the students come.

Community Language Resources: Questions to Consider

- Does your district have a language policy in place?
- Are language interpreters able to serve as cultural interpreters?

Did You Know?
Volunteer interpreters can be found through religious organizations, social services agencies, colleges and universities, and consulates.

Working with Interpreters

If your district uses volunteer interpreters from the community, NABE recommends that you set aside some time to brief the volunteers prior to any meetings. Confidentiality must be stressed at all times; volunteers must understand that whatever is discussed during a meeting should not be repeated elsewhere. Interpreters should be told that they are there to translate what is being said and not to advocate for the student or the parents. They also should be told the nature of the meeting and how long it will last.

Working with Interpreters: Did You Know?

- Allow time to brief interpreters prior to the meeting or activity.
- Confidentiality and neutrality should be stressed at all times.

Use the checklists on page 52-53 of this guide to assess how your school works with interpreters.

Interpreter Pools

Some school districts, realizing the need for interpretation of the many languages represented in their student population, have established interpreter pools. These pools are made up of individuals who can provide oral interpretation services. Some individuals also can provide written translations. Interpreters receive training in different areas and are usually available through the central office. If you are fortunate enough to have an interpreter pool available through your district, you will find that these individuals are experienced in working in schools. However, school personnel who use interpreter pools should still set aside time before the meeting to brief the interpreter.

Interpreter Pools: Questions to Consider

- Are trained interpreters available through my school district's central office?
- Has time been set aside before the meeting or session to brief the interpreter?

Interpretation Equipment

Special equipment allows for simultaneous interpretation during small-group meetings (IEP meetings, for example). This equipment usually comes with 10 headsets. If your district does not have this equipment and the cost is prohibitive for your school, you may want to share the expense with other schools in your area. The advantage of using headsets during interpretation is that the interpreter can translate simultaneously rather than consecutively. Simultaneous interpretation (such as you would see during a meeting of the United Nations) occurs when the interpreter translates the speaker's words as they speak. Consecutive translation occurs when the speaker utters a short phrase and then pauses while the interpreter translates the phrase. Simultaneous interpretation is a much faster process, allowing meetings to proceed at an almost normal pace.

Interpretation Resources: Did You Know?

- District wide interpreter pools have trained interpreters available for different types of meetings and activities.
- Schools can purchase equipment to allow for simultaneous interpretation during small-group meetings.

Using the Native Language in the Classroom

Schools that are successful with English language learners know how to incorporate their students' native languages into the curriculum. NABE suggests that schools have a defined language policy. This policy should go beyond simply providing support for students speaking languages other than English. For most schools, embracing a multilingual policy requires a change in the way staff view the larger community. Ideally, different languages are seen as a resource.

Using the Native Language in the Classroom: Questions to Consider

- Does my school have a defined language policy?
- What does that policy say?

NABE Recommendations Regarding Parental Involvement

Many educators consider parental involvement to be critical for good schools. However, just as many school leaders continue to be challenged to find ways in which to make this happen. You are probably aware of research that demonstrates better educational and behavioral outcomes for children whose parents are involved in their education. IDEA '97 requires parental involvement at every step of the evaluation, placement, and reevaluation of children with disabilities.

A word of caution regarding parental involvement: In some countries, teachers are viewed as figures of great authority and a letter requesting parental assistance can be baffling. Parents may interpret such a request as an admission on the part of the school that it does not know what it is doing. By including clear explanations as to why you are requesting certain information or providing certain services you can help parents understand why you want them involved. For example, you can explain to parents that the school would like a personal history of the child to better understand his or her language development. Parental participation in meaningful activities lets parents know that they have a real voice in the school.

There are many reasons why parents will not come to school, even after the principal and staff have made an effort to invite them. For some parents, logistics can be problematic. Lack of transportation, childcare, and even time can be major obstacles—even for parents who *want* to visit their child's school. Consider inviting parents to visit during evenings or weekends; flexible scheduling allows staff to meet with parents during times that are more convenient for them. It is also a good idea to make childcare services avail-

able during visiting hours. Parents may be at risk of becoming isolated from the rest of the school community unless a substantial effort is made to ensure their participation.

The issue of language is also critical in determining if parents will come to school. Some school districts have hired bilingual parent liaisons who serve as advocates and facilitators for parents. The parent liaison can ensure that communication in the parent's native language takes place and that documents are translated accurately.

Schools can also use parent journals or log books to communicate regularly with parents. These journals are the responsibility of the teacher *and* the parent. For those parents who have limited literacy, the journal can be completed by phone.

Finally, consider including parents in the governance of the school. This can be done by involving parents on existing committees or by creating a parent advisory committee.

Use the checklists on pages 54-56 of this guide to assess how your school communicates with parents to identify areas of strength and improvement.

Parental Involvement: Questions to Consider

- Has my school made it clear to parents why we want them involved?
- Have we provided parents with specific ways to be involved in the education of their children?
- Do we provide childcare, transportation, or alternate meeting days and times if needed?
- Does our staff communicate regularly with parents? Do the teachers use journals or other methods of communication?
- Do we have bilingual personnel available for those parents who do not speak English?

Parent Liaison/Mentor/ Counselor

The use of what has been termed counselors, liaisons, or mentors has been recommended for schools where a number of different languages are spoken. Many of these individuals can communicate with family members in their native languages; others are trained to work with interpreters. Mentors help parents and students navigate the school system, understand what is expected from them and their children, and explain our educational system—which may be very different from the systems in their native countries. Parent mentors are even more critical for migrant families. These families should have immediate access to a mentor, as their time in the community may be brief due to the nature of their work.

Communicating with Parents of Children with Disabilities

As the leader of your school, you need to know the rights that parents of children with disabilities have under IDEA '97. IDEA '97 regulations promote parental participation in many ways. An important provision of IDEA '97 regards communication with parents in their native language. IDEA requires that notices to parents be "provided in the native language of the parent or other mode of communication." 34 C.F.R. §300.503 (c)(1)(ii). This section also states:

> *If the native language or other mode of communication of the parent is not a written language, the public agency shall take steps to ensure that the notice is translated orally or by other means to the parent in his or her native language or other mode of communication; that the parent understands the content of the notice; and that there is written evidence that the requirements....have been met. 34 C.F.R. §300.503 (c)(2)(i)(ii)(iii).*

NABE Recommendations for Teacher Assistance Teams

The decision to refer an English language learner for a special education evaluation can be a complex one. Ideally, the referral should be the last step in a process that is designed to assist the student as well as the staff. The exception to this rule is, of course, students who come to school with certain physical conditions that may affect their learning. These students may or may not require special services. However, they should be referred for an evaluation. They may need some accommodations or modifications to the curriculum that can be provided in the regular classroom.

For students whose situations are not as clear, let us look at a popular concept many schools have instituted to make better and more focused referrals to special education. One of the ways schools try to avoid unnecessary referrals to special education is by developing Teacher Assistance Teams (TAT). These teams come together to help teachers and other school personnel determine what changes can be made to instruction or curriculum for students who are experiencing difficulties in class.

It is important to note that these teams are *not* special education evaluation teams. Educators must understand that English language learners are their responsibility whether or not they have disabilities. The TAT can provide an effective mechanism for early intervention for struggling learners—not only for the student, but for all personnel involved.

The TAT can help teachers learn new classroom interventions that widen their repertoire of instructional and behavioral management techniques. It also can be an important tool for school leaders, because through this collaborative process teachers can modify their instructional techniques. The TAT can focus on the complex interaction between the student, the teacher, and the rest of the classroom—not just on student behavior.

How Do Teacher Assistance Teams Work?

Schools that have a collegial atmosphere, where teachers feel comfortable talking to their colleagues about student performance or their own instructional techniques, will find that TATs can be an excellent tool to help improve teaching and learning. TATs are simply a more organized and systematic way to facilitate this ongoing consultation process. TATs can be comprised of teachers, counselors, administrators, related service providers, and others as needed. Bilingual or English as a second language teachers and special education teachers may be involved as appropriate. Principals can appoint these individuals to the team on a rotating basis (it is important to rotate the members of the team so that the responsibilities are shared among staff).

Principals can select a meeting time when all team members are available or, if necessary, provide coverage for teachers during school hours. A form that can be used to record the proceedings of the meeting is found on page 44 of this publication. It can be copied or modified to fit your specific needs.

Teachers should document student behavior and bring this documentation to the team. Typically, a member of the TAT will carry out an additional observation in the classroom. This second observation can be a valuable tool in providing a different perspective on what is occurring. Then the team will develop suggestions that can be implemented.

About Teacher Assistance Teams

- The TAT provides a variety of input to support the teacher in determining methods to assist the student.
- The TAT can help improve teaching and learning by focusing on adapting classroom instruction for individual student needs.
- Staff are appointed to the TAT on a rotating basis.
- TAT meetings are scheduled regularly.
- Proceedings of the TAT should be documented (see form on page 44).

What Information Should Be Brought to a Teacher Assistance Team?

Teachers should bring documentation of the student's educational performance in class. They should also bring documentation of the different methods and techniques they have used to address student needs. Documentation should be complete with dates, length of time the behavior has been observed, and the length of time the classroom interventions have been implemented. Teachers should provide a reasonable amount of time for the team to gather information from observations and document the student's present level of performance in the classroom. The amount of time should be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Once the team gathers all relevant information, a plan of action can be developed. This plan should include information on interventions the classroom teacher or others will carry out in the class, changes that will be made to the classroom or to the instructional program, and dates for reviewing the plan.

Parents should be kept informed of the plan, its implementation, and the progress that is made.

Information to Bring to a Teacher Assistance Team

- Teachers should bring documentation of the student's present level of educational performance and/or behavior to the TAT.
- Teachers should also bring documentation of the different methods and techniques they have used to address their concerns.
- Teachers should bring documentation of the length of time classroom interventions were used.

What Additional Information Can the Teacher Assistance Team Collect?

The IDEA '97 term for specific learning disability "does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of...environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage" 34 C.F.R. §300.7 (b)(10)(ii).

The TAT can collect additional pre-referral information, which could include information on the student's family and background and any issues faced by the family that could affect the child's ability to learn in the classroom. Parental participation in the pre-referral process is critical. Parents can be asked to provide information about the student's health, previous schooling, years in the United States, and siblings, as well as about the child's development. A parent interview form, in both English and Spanish, is included on pages 40-43 of this publication. This form can be photocopied or modified to suit your school's specific needs.

If possible, gather information about the student's present level of educational performance in his or her native language. This is critical if the student arrived in the country recently or was previously educated in his or her native language (whether in the country of origin or in the United States) Some school districts may have native language tests available. Observation of the student's native language use in different contexts (e.g., playground, home) can reveal much about his or her language development and usage.

Parental participation also is important if it is determined that a referral would be appropriate. Parents will already be aware that the school has concerns about their child's learning and will know that the school has implemented strategies to address these concerns.

Additional Information Did You Know?

- Parents can provide important information regarding the student's history and development.
- Information can be gathered on how the student uses his or her native language.

To assess how TAT is working in your school, use the checklists on pages 57-59 of this guide to identify areas of success and improvement.

NABE Recommendations Regarding Evaluation, Eligibility and Individualized Education Programs

If the TAT has done its job and the team still has significant concerns about a student's educational or behavioral performance, a referral to determine the student's eligibility for special education services may be appropriate. In such cases, meet with the student's parents, teachers, and other personnel as necessary to complete the referral form. Parents must give consent for their child to be evaluated. The process should be carefully explained and parents should be provided with a copy of their rights under IDEA '97. Such information should be provided in the parents' native language, or at least explained to them in their native language.

Any time a parent asks for a referral to special education, that request must be honored, whether or not the child has been through a pre-referral process. Remember that IDEA '97 allows parents to request an eligibility determination if they feel their child may have a disability. However, you may contest this request if you feel it is not appropriate. In such cases, contact your special education coordinator immediately, as hearings are usually handled at the district level. Different states have different timelines for evaluation and placement.

Although the term "evaluation" has frequently been used synonymously with testing, evaluation is a much broader practice. An evaluation must include the compilation and review of a wide variety of data. A test may be one item in a data gathering effort that can be supplemented by other measures. Educators in the United States rely heavily on tests to measure student progress; how-

ever, most tests cannot produce the detailed results needed to evaluate students whose native language is not English.

As the school's leader, the principal has a great deal of influence on how the assessment of students takes place. Evaluating English language learners is a complicated process. In this section, we will talk about some of the difficulties and provide suggestions on how to make the best use of evaluations.

Section 34 C.F.R. §300.534 (a)(1) of IDEA '97 mandates that "a group of qualified professionals...must determine whether the child is a child with a disability...." Therefore, there will probably be a team evaluating the child to determine eligibility for special education services.

The special education team will gather evidence in addition to that collected by the TAT to determine if a child has a disability. Ideally, there is a team at your school with which you work regularly. However, many school districts have special education personnel in the central office who assist with evaluations as needed.

Ask evaluation personnel what tests or assessments they plan to use with your students. There are two important concepts in using tests and assessments appropriately. The first is that if a student is being evaluated in his or her native language, the tests or assessments used should have been developed and tested on students who are similar in language, culture, and background to the child who is being evaluated. If the test does not reflect the cultural and linguistic background of the student, the instruments may not measure the student's true performance. The second concept refers to the very precise way the test must be administered in order to produce accurate results. If a test is supposed to be administered within a specific period of time or under prescribed conditions, to administer the test in any other manner may not produce valid results.

Language of Evaluation

Before you can determine whether the instruments used with a particular student are appropriate, you need to know about key IDEA '97 provisions. The first is 34 C.F.R. §300.532 (a)(1)(i-ii), which refers to nondiscrimination in evaluation:

> *...tests and other evaluation materials used to assess a child...are selected and administered so as not to be discriminatory on a racial or cultural basis; and are provided and administered in the child's native language or other mode of communication, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so... .*

This provision is important for your English language learners. As the leader of your school, you have a great deal of influence regarding the instruments used with your students.

In the previous paragraphs we covered the issue of the appropriateness of the instrument. The tests or assessments used should reflect the characteristics of the student being evaluated, including language. If the student is not being evaluated in his or her native language, the team should explain the reason for this decision. If the student has been educated in English only, or for an extended period of time, it may be appropriate to conduct the evaluation in English. It may be appropriate to evaluate the student in both languages, particularly if the student has been in a bilingual program. The decision to test bilingually or in one language should be made on an individual basis, taking into consideration the student's school history.

If the assessment personnel are not conducting the evaluation in the native language because there are no personnel who speak the student's language, you should be aware that the results of the evaluation could be almost meaningless. In such a situation, assessment personnel should at least work with interpreters to gather information that can help support a determination.

In reference to situations where evaluation personnel decide to use an instrument that is administered under nonstandard conditions (e.g., through an interpreter), IDEA '97 states the following:

> *...If an assessment is not conducted under standard conditions, a description to the extent to which it varied from standard conditions (e.g., the qualifications of the person administering the test, or the method of test administration) must be included in the evaluation report.... 34 C.F.R. 300.532 (c)(2).*

Evaluation Procedures

IDEA '97 regulations are very clear about not allowing a single procedure to be used as the basis for a determination of a disability. When a variety of information about a student is gathered from a variety of sources, the determination is more likely to be accurate. If a student is found to be eligible for special education services, this information will be used in developing an IEP.

34 C.F.R. §300.532 – Evaluation Procedures

Each public agency shall ensure, at a minimum, that the following requirements are met:

(a)

(1) Tests and other evaluation materials used to assess a child under Part B of the Act—

(i) Are selected and administered so as not to be discriminatory on a racial or cultural basis; and

(ii) Are provided and administered in the child's native language or other mode of communication, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so; and

(2) Materials and procedures used to assess a child with limited English proficiency are selected and administered to ensure that they measure the extent to which the child has a disability and needs special education, rather than measuring the child's English language skills.

(b)

A variety of assessment tools and strategies are used to gather relevant functional and developmental information about the child, including information provided by the parent, and information related to enabling the child to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum (or for a preschool child, to participate in appropriate activities), that may assist in determining—

(1) Whether the child is a child with a disability under §300.7; and

(2) The content of the child's IEP.

Evaluations: Questions to Consider

- Are the instruments being used appropriate for the student?
- Will a variety of tests, instruments, or procedures be used to determine if a child is a child with a disability?
- Will actual test scores be provided or will the test results be reported descriptively?
- Will the student be evaluated in his or her native language? Why or why not?
- Are bilingual personnel available to complete the evaluation?
- If there are no bilingual personnel available, will interpreters be used to evaluate the child?
- Will the student be evaluated in the language of instruction?
- Has the assessment process been explained to the parents in their native language if necessary?

Refer to the checklists on pages 60-62 of this guide to assess the evaluation procedures in your school.

LEARNING ENGLISH—HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

The complex process of learning a second language is one that is beyond the scope of this publication. However, a brief discussion of the topic is appropriate here.

Generally, students who come to school with well-developed skills in their native language have an easier time learning English. Students who have not had the opportunity to develop their first language because of interrupted schooling or other factors may struggle to develop English language skills and may need specialized services.

Different types of language usage will develop at varying speeds. For example, it is common to hear a child using phrases and sentences in English after only a few months in the United States. However, this tends to be language that is used on the playground or with peers, or language that is fairly repetitive and contextually based (e.g., "I have to go to the bathroom"). Language that is used for academic development is much more complex and is used in situations where the context is not as clear. This language may take much longer to develop. Collier (1995) estimates that academic language takes from four to seven years to develop. It can take even longer than that, depending on several factors (interrupted schooling, level of development of native language skills, the emotional state of the child and family, etc.).

Developing language depends on many factors, including instructional methods. Some schools use the child's first language to support the development of the second through bilingual programs or some native language instruction. Other schools incorporate the different languages and cultures represented in the school. Whatever the instructional approach of the school, including languages and cultures of the students in meaningful ways lets them know that they are valued members of the school community.

Eligibility

After gathering information about the student, the team will determine the student's eligibility for special education services. Parents must be provided with the documentation used to make an eligibility determination.

During the process of determining eligibility, and if, for example, a learning disability is suspected, the team must make a determination that the discrepancy between achievement and ability is not caused by "environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage" 34 C.F.R. § 300.541 (b)(4).

The team also must ensure that the learning difficulties for which the student was referred to special education are not due to "...lack of instruction in reading or math, or limited English proficiency" 34 C.F.R. § 300.534 (b)(1)(i)(ii). The information the TAT has gathered will be most useful at this point in the process. The determination of disability can be difficult to make, especially for students whose backgrounds are complex (e.g., those who did not attend school in their home countries or students living in poverty).

It is very important for the team to determine if the suspected disability is manifested when the student is using his or her native language. A child cannot be disabled in one language and not another. For example, if a child demonstrates severe reading difficulties and has had the opportunity to learn to read in his or her native language, the team should find out if the child has experienced difficulty reading in that language.

Developing the Individualized Education Program

Once eligibility is determined, an IEP must be developed. The IEP team must include the parents and at least one of the student's regular education teachers, among others. IDEA '97 states that schools must ensure that parents understand the proceedings of the IEP meeting by using an interpreter if their native language is not English. IDEA '97 also contains a clause that states that the IEP team must "...in the case of a child with limited English proficiency, consider the language needs of the child as those needs relate to the child's IEP...". 34 C.F.R. §300.346 (a)(2)(ii).

NABE Recommendations for Instruction and Professional Development

If native language instruction is used in your school, you may want to make sure that instruction for the student with a disability continues in that language. Brice and Roseberry-McKibbin (2001) reviewed the literature on second language acquisition and concluded that maintaining the native language has positive results for bilingual students with disabilities. Furthermore, the editors of *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998) recommend that reading instruction be provided in the first language, if possible, with English literacy introduced later. However, there is a prevalent misconception that children with disabilities should not be taught in two languages because it can be confusing to them. Depriving a child of a language he or she was using for learning can have a negative effect on that child's education. In developing the IEP, therefore, you will want to keep the child's instructional program in the language that was used before the determination of eligibility was made.

IDEA '97 requires children to be educated with their nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. Frequently, this requirement is referred to as the least restrictive environment (LRE). Even children with more severe disabilities can be successfully educated in regular classrooms if the necessary supports and accommodations are in place for the child and the school staff.

Professional Development

After reviewing this publication, you may decide that your staff needs additional training in some areas. If your school has had a sudden influx of students who speak other languages, your staff may need training in second language acquisition to provide the instruction necessary for students to develop English language skills. Teachers also may need training to develop the skills and knowledge they need to provide early intervention for students who are struggling with reading and math. Maintaining a calm, organized, and disciplined classroom is critical for student achievement, yet teachers may not have sufficient skills to manage classroom behavior. A schoolwide approach to behavior management can be highly effective in improving the behavior of most students. Finally, although it is your responsibility to provide professional development, you might want to discuss with your teachers the type of training they think would be helpful.

How can you provide the training your staff needs? The district's professional development office can provide a variety of training resources. The Resources section of this guide will direct you to other sources for professional development opportunities. You can also use the checklists on pages 63-64 of this guide to identify areas to address through training.

Colleges and universities may have partnerships with local school districts. Even if none exists, you may be able to negotiate with the college or university directly to provide training tailored specifically for your staff. Some clearinghouses or other federally funded centers also will work with individual schools to implement schoolwide reforms. You can also use the self-assessment checklists and charts on pages 63-64 in the back of this book to identify areas to address through staff professional development.

Corcoran (1995) outlines several principles that should be followed when planning for professional development:

- Focus professional development on teaching and learning.
- Balance individual and organizational interests in professional development.
- Embed professional development in the workplace.
- Make sure that teachers who work with vulnerable students have solid professional development opportunities.

Professional Development: Questions to To Consider

- Does the staff in my school need additional training to better serve our student population?
- Have we identified the areas to target for training?
- What opportunities are available from the district, and from colleges and universities in the area?
- Do we have a partnership with a college or university that could provide training?

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APPENDIX

Resources

Organizations

National Association for Bilingual Education **www.nabe.org**

1030 15th Street, NW
Suite 470
Washington, DC 20005-1503
202-898-1829

The National Association for Bilingual Education is the country's leading professional organization working for the education of English language learners. NABE provides information and professional development activities for teachers, school administrators, and parents.

Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence **www.crede.ucsc.edu**

1156 High Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95064
831-459-3500

CREDE is a federally funded research and development program focused on improving the education of students whose ability to reach their potential is challenged by language or cultural barriers, race, geographic location, or poverty. CREDE offers a wide range of multi-media products (interactive CD-ROMs, videos, online directories), print publications, and a useful Web site for practitioners, researchers, and parents.

The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University **www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu**

124 Mt. Auburn Street
Suite 400 South
Cambridge, MA 02138
617-496-6367

The mission of this project is to help renew the civil rights movement by bridging the worlds of ideas and action, and by becoming a preeminent source of intellectual capital and a forum for building consensus within that movement. Many reports and resources related to minority issues in special education are available on the project Web site.

Council for Exceptional Children **www.cec.sped.org**

1110 North Glebe Road
Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201-5704
888-232-7733
866-915-5000 (TTY)

Established in 1922, the Council for Exceptional Children is the largest professional organization dedicated to improving educational outcomes for individuals with disabilities and for gifted children.

Learning Disabilities Association **www.ldanatl.org**

4156 Library Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15234-1349
412-341-1515

The Learning Disabilities Association is a volunteer organization of parents and other individuals dedicated to defining and finding solutions for the broad spectrum of learning disabilities.

National Alliance of Black School Educators **www.nabse.org**

310 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20003
800-221-2654

The nation's largest network of African American educators, NABSE is dedicated to improving the educational accomplishments of African American youth through the development and deployment of instructional and motivational methods that increase levels of inspiration, attendance, and overall achievement.

National Association of School Psychologists **www.nasponline.org**

4340 East West Highway
Suite 402
Bethesda, MD 20814
301-657-0270
301-657-4155 (TTY)

The National Association of School Psychologists has a mission to promote educationally and psychologically healthy environments for all children and youth by implementing research-based effective programs that prevent problems, enhance independence, and promote optimal learning.

National Association of State Directors of Special Education **www.nasdse.org**

1800 Diagonal Road
Suite 320
Alexandria, VA 22314
703-519-3800

The National Association of State Directors of Special Education, Inc. is a not-for-profit corporation established in 1938. Its membership includes State Directors of Special Education. NASDSE supports education programs for students with disabilities in the United States and outlying areas.

PACER: Parent Advocacy Center Coalition for Educational Rights **www.pacer.org**

8161 Normandale Boulevard
Minneapolis, MN 55437
952-838-9000
952-838-0190 (TTY)
Toll-free in Greater Minnesota: (800) 537-2237

Founded in 1977, PACER Center was created by parents of children and youth with disabilities to help other parents and families facing similar challenges. Today, PACER Center expands opportunities and enhances the quality of life of children and young adults with disabilities and their families.

Clearinghouses and Technical Assistance Centers

National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Education Programs **www.ncela.gwu.edu**

The George Washington University
Center for Study of Language and Education
2121 K Street, NW
Suite 260
Washington, DC 20037
800-321-6223
202-467-0867 (in the DC area)

This Web site contains hundreds of articles, research reports, ERIC Digests (short summaries of research on specific topics), and many resources in Spanish. Topics include language and culture, professional development, assessment, and special education.

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities **www.nichcy.org**

P.O. Box 1492
Washington, DC 20013
800-695-0285 (V/TTY)

NICHCY provides up-to-date materials on IDEA for professionals and parents. The Web site has a variety of materials in Spanish, including the IDEA '97 Training Package, which contains 145 overheads in Spanish.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support Technical Assistance Center **www.pbis.org**

1235 College of Education
1761 Adler Street
Eugene, OR 97403
541-346-2505

The PBIS Technical Assistance Center focuses on dissemination of information and demonstration on developing schoolwide programs that foster positive behavioral interventions and support.

Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice **www.air.org/cecp**

1000 Thomas Jefferson Street, NW
Washington, DC 20007
888-457-1551
877-334-3499 (TTY)

The Center focuses on the development of children with emotional disturbances. The Web site contains articles in different areas related to children with emotional disturbance as well as many useful links.

Early Childhood Research Institute on Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) **www.clas.uiuc.edu**

61 Children's Research Center
51 Gerty Drive
Champaign, IL 61820-7498
800-583-4135 (V/TTY)

The CLAS Institute identifies, evaluates, and promotes effective and appropriate early intervention practices and preschool practices that are sensitive and respectful to children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Associations of Service Providers Implementing IDEA Reforms in Education (ASPIIRE) Partnership **www.ideapractices.org**

Council for Exceptional Children
1110 North Glebe Road
Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201-5704
877-232-4332
866-915-5000 (TTY)

The ASPIIRE Partnership brings together teachers, paraprofessionals, and related service providers to enhance the services provided under IDEA '97 to students with disabilities.

Family and Advocates Partnership for Education (FAPE) **www.fape.org**

PACER Center
8161 Normandale Boulevard
Minneapolis, MN 55437-1044
888-248-0822

FAPE was established to inform parents and advocates about IDEA '97. FAPE represents grassroots organizations that work to ensure positive educational outcomes for children with disabilities.

IDEA Local Implementation by Local Administrators (ILIAD) Partnership **www.ideapractices.org**

Council for Exceptional Children
1110 North Glebe Road
Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201-5704
877-232-4332
866-915-5000 (TTY)

The ILIAD Partnership coordinates resources to promote the implementation of IDEA '97 through collaboration and effective leadership of instructional and administrative practices.

The Policymaker Partnership (PMP) **www.ideapolicy.org**

The National Association of State Directors of Special Education
100 Diagonal Road
Suite 320
Alexandria, VA 22314
877-433-2463
703-519-7008 (TDD)

The Policymaker Partnership increases the capacity of policymakers to act as informed change agents who are focused on improving educational results for students with disabilities.

Federal Offices

U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) **www.ed.gov/offices/OCR**

U.S. Department of Education
Office for Civil Rights
Customer Service Team
Mary E. Switzer Building
330 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20202
800-421-3481
877-521-2172 (TDD)

The Office for Civil Rights enforces five federal statutes that prohibit discrimination in education programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services **www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS**

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202
202-205-5465

The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services is committed to improving results and outcomes for people of all ages with disabilities. OSERS provides a wide array of support to parents and individuals, school districts, and states in three main areas: special education, vocational rehabilitation, and research.

Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Office of Special Education Programs **www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP**

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Special Education Programs
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202
202-205-5507

OSEP is dedicated to improving results for infants, toddlers, children, and youth from birth through 21 with disabilities by providing leadership and financial support to assist states and local districts. OSEP administers the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students (OELA)

www.ed.gov/offices/OBEMLA

U.S. Department of Education
Office of English Language Acquisition
330 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20202
202-205-5463

The Office of English Language Acquisition (formerly the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs) provides national leadership in promoting high-quality education for the nation's population of English language learners. OELA's mission is to include various elements of school reform in programs designed to assist the language minority agenda.

APPENDIX

NABE Recommended Forms

ENTREVISTA DE PADRES RECOMENDADO POR NABE

Nombre del estudiante:

Fecha de nacimiento:

Grado:

Nombre del profesor (a):

Nombre del padre, la madre de la otra persona participando en esta entrevista:

Fecha de la entrevista:

¿Con quién vive su hijo(a)?_____

¿Cuántos hermanos o hermanas tiene su hijo(a)? _____

¿Qué lugar lleva su hijo(a) en el orden de nacimiento? _____

¿Qué idioma o idiomas se hablan en su hogar? _____

¿En qué edad su hijo (a) comenzó a hablar? _____

¿Diría usted que su hijo(a) usa bien el idioma de acuerdo a su edad?_____

¿Cómo describiría usted el comportamiento de su hijo(a) en el hogar? _____

¿De qué actividades disfruta su hijo(a) en el hogar?_____

¿Disfruta su hijo(a) de la lectura o de los libros? _____

¿Asistió su hijo(a) a la escuela antes de llegar a los Estados Unidos? ☐ Sí ☐ No

¿Cuántos años estuvo su hijo(a) en la escuela?_____

¿Hubo algún tiempo durante el cual su hijo(a) no pudo asistir a la escuela? ☐ Sí ☐ No

¿Si no pudo asistir su hijo (a) a la escuela, cuál fue la razón? _____

¿Por cuánto tiempo estuvo fuera de la escuela? _____

¿Aprendió a leer su hijo(a) antes de llegar a los Estados Unidos? ☐ Sí ☐ No

ENTREVISTA DE PADRES RECOMENDADO POR NABE (CONTINUA)

¿Ha tenido su hijo (a) alguna dificultad en la lectura? ☐ Sí ☐ No

¿Qué tipo de dificultad? _____

¿Disfruta su hijo(a) de asistir a la escuela? ☐ Sí ☐ No

¿Cuales son las actividades que más disfruta su hijo(a) en la escuela?_____

_____

¿Sufrió la madre alguna complicación durante el embarazo o el nacimiento del niño(a)? Favor explique.

_____

_____

¿Padece su hijo (a) de algún tipo de problema de salud? ☐ Sí ☐ No

¿Cuáles son éstos? _____

¿Toma su hijo(a) algún tipo de medicamento? _____

¿Existe alguna otra cosa que usted piensa debe saber la escuela acerca de su hijo(a)? _____

_____

NABE RECOMMENDED PARENT INTERVIEW

Name of the Student: Date of Birth:

Grade: Name of Teacher:

Name of Parent Interviewed: Date of Parent Interview:

With whom does your child live? _____

How many siblings does your child have? _____

Where is your child in the birth order? _____

What language or languages are spoken in your home? _____

At what age did your child begin to speak? _____

Would you say your child speaks clearly for his or her age? ☐ Yes ☐ No

How would you describe your child's behavior at home? _____

What activities does your child enjoy at home? _____

Does your child enjoying reading or looking at books? _____

Did your child go to school before arriving in the U.S.? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If so, how many years did your child go to school? _____

Were there any years your child was not able to attend school? ☐ Yes ☐ No How many? _____

Why was your child unable to attend school? _____

_____

Did your child learn to read in school before coming to the U.S.? ☐ Yes ☐ No

NABE RECOMMENDED PARENT INTERVIEW (CONTINUED)

Did your child have any difficulty with reading in your native language? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If so, what type of difficulty? _____

Does your child enjoy coming to school? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What activities does your child enjoy the most in school? _____

Were there any complications during the pregnancy or delivery of this child? Please explain _____

_____

Does your child have any health problems or has he or she had any in the past? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If so, what are/were they? _____

Is your child currently taking any medications? _____

Are there any other issues related to your child that you feel the school should know? _____

_____

NABE RECOMMENDED PROTOCOL
TEACHER ASSISTANCE TEAM
INITIAL MEETING REPORT

Name of Referring Teacher:
Grade:
Name of Student:
DOB:

Reason for referral to TAT _____

What strategies or modifications have already been used in the classroom? _____

_____

What have the outcomes been? _____

Documentation (please check those submitted)

- ☐ Parent Interview Form
- ☐ Classroom Observation
- ☐ Checklist
- ☐ Student Portfolio
- ☐ Test Scores
- ☐ Other _____

Will an additional observation be necessary? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If so, who will carry it out and when will it be completed? _____

Recommendations	Person Responsible	Date Completed
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Date of next TAT meeting: _____

APPENDIX

NABE Recommended Self-Assessment Checklists

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Conducting A Self-Assessment

NABE RECOMMENDATIONS

To determine appropriate referrals of English language learners to special education, a good place for school leaders to start is by reviewing student data.

Student Demographics		White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/ Pacific Islander	American Indian	Other	TOTAL
Line 1	The number of children from each ethnic background in my school							
Line 2	The percentages of these children in comparison to the school population (Line 1/Total of Line 1)	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Line 3	Of the total number of students in my school, the number receiving special education services							

— *Continued* —

Student Demographics		White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/ Pacific Islander	American Indian	Other	TOTAL
Line 4	Of the students receiving special education services, the percent from each ethnic group (Line 3/Total Line 3)	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
SELF-ASSESSMENT								
	For each ethnic group represented in my school, is there an approximately equal proportion of this group receiving special education services? (compare lines 2 & 4)	○Equal ○Over ○Under ○Need to monitor	○Equal ○Over ○Under ○Need to monitor	○Equal ○Over ○Under ○Need to monitor	○Equal ○Over ○Under ○Need to monitor	○Equal ○Over ○Under ○Need to monitor	○Equal ○Over ○Under ○Need to monitor	

Communicating with English Language Learners and Their Parents

NABE RECOMMENDATIONS

Understanding a child's family and social background is an important first step in ensuring that referrals to special education are as accurate as possible. Principals can draw upon a number of resources to assist in communicating with families.

LANGUAGE RESOURCE LIST

Interpreters can provide translation services during parent meetings, assessments, IEP meetings, etc. Interpreter pools may be available through your school district or other community organization. Use the following list to keep a record of the interpreters available in your area.

○ **School District**	Contact: Telephone: E-mail: Address:	Languages Spoken by Interpreters:
○ **Community Organization**	Contact: Telephone: E-mail: Address:	Languages Spoken by Interpreters:

— *Continued* —

○ **Local University/College**	Contact: Telephone: E-mail: Address:	Languages Spoken by Interpreters:
○ **Religious Organization**	Contact: Telephone: E-mail: Address:	Languages Spoken by Interpreters:
○ **Consulate**	Contact: Telephone: E-mail: Address:	Languages Spoken by Interpreters:
○ **Social Service Agency**	Contact: Telephone: E-mail: Address:	Languages Spoken by Interpreters:
○ **Local Parent Organization**	Contact: Telephone: E-mail: Address:	Languages Spoken by Interpreters:
○ **Other**	Contact: Telephone: E-mail: Address:	Languages Spoken by Interpreters:

— *Continued* —

Communicating with English Language Learners and Their Parents

NABE RECOMMENDATIONS

Understanding a child's family and social background is an important first step in ensuring that referrals to special education are as accurate as possible. Principals can draw upon a number of resources to assist in communicating with families.

LANGUAGE RESOURCE LIST

Special interpretation equipment allows for simultaneous interpretation during small-group meetings (IEP meetings, for example). Check to see if your school district's central office or other community agencies has this equipment.

○ **Local School District**	Contact: Telephone: E-mail: Address:

— *Continued* —

○ **Other Local School District**	Contact: Telephone: E-mail: Address:
○ **Social Service Agency**	Contact: Telephone: E-mail: Address:
○ **Local Parent Organization**	Contact: Telephone: E-mail: Address:
○ **Other**	Contact: Telephone: E-mail: Address:

— Continued —

Communicating with English Language Learners and Their Parents

NABE RECOMMENDATIONS

Working with interpreters, whether they are language and/or cultural interpreters, is a useful strategy for involving the parents of the English language learners in your school.	All of the time	Sometimes, needs improvement	Not at all, need a plan	Not applicable to my school
Time is scheduled prior to the meeting or activity to brief interpreters.				
The interpreter is provided with the necessary information about the nature of the meeting and how long it will last.				
Interpreters understand that their role is to translate what is being said and not to advocate for the student or the parents.				
The importance of maintaining confidentiality and neutrality at all times is stressed with the interpreter.				

— *Continued* —

BASED ON THE ASSESSMENT ABOVE, MY SCHOOL CAN IMPROVE IN THE FOLLOWING AREA(S):

IMPROVEMENT PLAN:

Communicating with English Language Learners and Their Parents

Benchmark:

Action Item	Person(s) to Involve	Resources Available

Parental Involvement

NABE RECOMMENDATIONS

Parental involvement is critical to a child's success in school programs and principals can employ various strategies for ensuring their participation.	All of the time	Sometimes, needs improvement	Not at all, need a plan	Not applicable to my school
The school staff makes it clear to parents why we want them involved.				
The school staff provides parents with specific ways to get involved in the education of their children.				
The school provides childcare, transportation, or alternate meeting days and times if needed.				
The school staff communicates regularly with parents. For example, they use journals, phone calls, or other methods of communication.				

Continued

Parental involvement is critical to a child's success in school programs and principals can employ various strategies for ensuring their participation.	**All of the time**	**Sometimes, needs improvement**	**Not at all, need a plan**	**Not applicable to my school**
Notices to parents are provided in their native language.				
Bilingual personnel are available for those parents who do not speak English.				
If bilingual personnel are not available, interpreters are on hand to assist in communicating with parents.				
The school involves parents in the governance of the school (e.g., parent advisory committee).				
The school utilizes counselors/mentors/liaisons to help parents and students navigate the school system.				

— *Continued* —

BASED ON THE ASSESSMENT ABOVE, MY SCHOOL CAN IMPROVE IN THE FOLLOWING AREA(S):

IMPROVEMENT PLAN:

Parental Involvement

Benchmark:

Action Item	Person(s) to Involve	Resources Available

Teacher Assistance Teams

NABE RECOMMENDATIONS

Teacher Assistance Teams (TAT) is one strategy for determining appropriate referrals of students to special education.	All of the time	Sometimes, needs improvement	Not at all, need a plan	Not applicable to my school
The TAT provides a variety of inputs to support the teacher in determining methods to assist the student.				
The TAT helps improve teaching and learning by focusing on adapting classroom instruction for individual student needs.				
Staff is appointed to the TAT on a rotating basis.				

— *Continued* —

Teacher Assistance Teams (TAT) is one strategy for determining appropriate referrals of students to special education.	**All of the time**	**Sometimes, needs improvement**	**Not at all, need a plan**	**Not applicable to my school**
TAT meetings are regularly scheduled.				
Proceedings of the TAT are documented.				
School personnel bring documentation of the student's present level of educational performance and/or behavior to the TAT.				
School personnel also bring documentation of the different methods and techniques they have used to address their concerns.				
Parents are included in the TAT process and provide important information regarding the student's history and development.				
Information is gathered on how the student uses his or her native language.				

Continued

BASED ON THE ASSESSMENT ABOVE, MY SCHOOL CAN IMPROVE IN THE FOLLOWING AREA(S):

IMPROVEMENT PLAN:

Teacher Assistance Teams

Benchmark:

Action Item	Person(s) to Involve	Resources Available

Evaluation

NABE RECOMMENDATIONS

An evaluation must include the compilation and review of a wide variety of data to determine whether a student has disabilities.	All of the time	Sometimes, eeds improvement	Not at all, need a plan	Not applicable to my school
The test(s) being used was developed and tested on students who have a similar language, culture, and background to the child who is being evaluated.				
The child is evaluated in his or her native language when the evaluation team determines it is appropriate to do so.				
A variety of tests, instruments, or procedures are used to determine if the child has a disability.				

— *Continued* —

An evaluation must include the compilation and review of a wide variety of data to determine whether a student has disabilities.	**All of the time**	**Sometimes, needs improvement**	**Not at all, need a plan**	**Not applicable to my school**
Bilingual personnel are available to complete the evaluation.				
In cases when no bilingual personnel are available, interpreters are on hand to assist in administering the test items.				
If the student is not evaluated in his or her native language, the team explains the reason for this decision.				
If an assessment is not conducted under standard conditions, a description to the extent to which it varied from standard conditions (e.g., the qualifications of the person administering the test, or the method of test administration) is included in the evaluation report.				
The assessment process is explained to the parents in their native language when necessary.				

— Continued —

BASED ON THE ASSESSMENT ABOVE, MY SCHOOL CAN IMPROVE IN THE FOLLOWING AREA(S):

IMPROVEMENT PLAN:

Evaluation

Benchmark:

Action Item	Person(s) to Involve	Resources Available

Professional Development

NABE RECOMMENDATIONS

After completing the various checklists in this guide, you may have identified areas to target for school staff professional development with regard to working with English language learners.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CHECKLIST

Communicating with Families	Areas to target through professional development:
	Goal of professional development:
	Action plan:
Working with Interpreters	Areas to target through professional development:
	Goal of professional development:
	Action plan:

Continued

Parental Involvement	Areas to target through professional development:
	Goal of professional development:
	Action plan:
Teacher Assistance Teams	Areas to target through professional development:
	Goal of professional development:
	Action plan:
Evaluation	Areas to target through professional development:
	Goal of professional development:
	Action plan:

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